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Chapter 2

Learning literacy in multilingual contexts: Scotland and South Africa

Abstract

Most of the research on early literacy acquisition is conducted with monolingual children in the English-speaking world who are learning to read and write in their home language. This chapter takes a different perspective and explores the issues faced by children engaging with literacies in their heritage language and in an additional language drawing on insights from the Global North (Scotland) and the Global South (South Africa). The chapter begins by describing the distinctiveness of the Scottish education system and the increasing linguistic diversity that is shaping Scotland's schools. This is followed by a look at different scholarly frameworks to support the understanding of children's biliteracy development, with particular attention paid to Hornberger's *Continua of Biliteracy*. This includes an examination of the additive bilingual model of Gaelic-medium education (GME). Next, the approaches to teaching reading using alphabetic scripts and reading in two languages is analysed with reference to English and isiXhosa. Finally, the chapter turns to the implications for provision and practices in multilingual contexts.

Introduction

Early literacy development is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. It is influenced by society's ideologies and orientations towards literacy and through the child's different behaviours, interactions and literacy practices in a variety of domains – home, community and school. Yet, most of the research on early literacy acquisition is conducted with monolingual children in the English-speaking world who are learning to read and write in their first language whilst the experiences of children who are engaging with literacies in more than one language have not been given sufficient visibility. This is of particular note in post-colonial countries in the Global South. This chapter takes a different stance and explores the issues faced by children engaging with literacies in their heritage language and in an additional language drawing on insights from the Global North (Scotland) and the Global South (South

Africa). The chapter concludes by looking at implications for provision and practices in multilingual contexts.

Distinctiveness of Scotland

Before examining the educational context in Scotland it is important to stress from the outset the distinction between the various countries that make up the United Kingdom (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales). Since the Acts of Union between the Parliaments in both Scotland and England in 1707, Scotland has retained control and management over its educational institutions (alongside the law) and as a result the social and cultural characteristics of educational policy and practice has been historically, and continues to be, dissimilar from the ways of England and the rest of the United Kingdom (UK).

This state autonomy is illustrated by a number of distinguishing educational features such as national curriculum development and implementation (*Curriculum for Excellence*), assessment and qualifications in schools, the organisation and management of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and benchmark standards which set official benchmarks on professional values, knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession. Furthermore, policy directives for supporting children with additional support needs including children with English as an additional language (EAL), the are fundamentally different in England and Scotland (Hancock, 2015).

Parliamentary devolution in 1999 and the election of a Nationalist Government in 2011 has also led to further divergences in political ideologies and policy discourses across the four nations of the United Kingdom. A renewed sense of national identity in Scotland has produced a re-examination of language affiliations and allegiances in society. As such a number of policies have been introduced and initiatives implemented to maintain and regenerate both the Gaelic and the Scots language in Scotland. Meanwhile these languages have also benefited from a series of resolutions adopted by the European Union to target these regional languages for promotion and action (alongside other indigenous and minority languages such as Catalan and Basque in Spain). In addition, the Scottish Government has introduced an ambitious 1+2 Language Strategy, based on the European model of plurilingual citizens, with an aim that, by 2020, every child in Scotland should have mastered the basics of two

additional languages by the time they leave primary school (Scottish Government 2012).

Linguistic Diversity in Scotland

Heritage language learners in Scotland are not a homogeneous group and a number of migratory flows have contributed to linguistically diverse classrooms. For nearly half a century Scotland's population has been characterized by large settled communities originally from commonwealth countries, such as Pakistan and Hong Kong, including speakers of Urdu, Punjabi, Cantonese and Hakka.

More recently, the expansion of the European Union (EU) in 2004, 2007 and 2013 brought 13¹ new countries into the Union, most of them in Central and Eastern Europe, presenting new opportunities for free movement of labour. These phases of enlargement have brought a substantial arrival of migrant workers to Scotland seeking employment, especially from Poland, who contribute to the country's economy by working in hospitality and catering; in agriculture; and in food processing sectors. Furthermore, the children of migrants have added to the linguistic diversity and the richness of mainstream multilingual classrooms (Hancock, 2012a). The 2011 census saw an eighteen-fold increase in the number of people who spoke Polish at home over the last decade, accounting for just less than half of the EU nationals resident in Scotland. Other significant EU nationals in Scotland by country include (in order of population size) Spain, Italy, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Hungary.

Issues relating to immigration and border control are still a reserved matter and managed by the UK government in Westminster. The UK Government's '*policy of dispersal*', introduced by Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, set out proposals to relocate refugee and asylum seekers from London and the southeast of England to the rest of the UK. These 'New Scots' are from a wide variety of heritage language backgrounds including Farsi, Arabic, Pashto, Kurdish, Roma and Shona. Clearly this demographic fluctuates depending on developments in the countries suffering from conflict and persecution. For example, as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Syria,

¹ Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia joined in 2004; Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007 and Croatia joined in 2013.

over a thousand Syrians refugees have arrived throughout Scotland since 2015 as part of the UK government's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme.

Frameworks for understanding biliteracy development

A number of authors have created analytical frameworks to ease the explanation of the complex nature of teaching and learning literacy in linguistically diverse settings. Durgunoğlu and Verhoeven's (1998) work on literacy development in multilingual contexts looked at the anthropological, psychological and educational perspectives whilst Cope and Kalantzis (2000) devised the multiliteracies framework to acknowledge the growing influence of digital communication technologies on literacy development within a shrinking global village. Meanwhile, McBride-Chang (2004) adapted Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model to describe literacy development, paying particular attention to readers. This hierarchy of four systems suggests that development never takes place in a vacuum but is always embedded within a child's experiences in a particular environmental context. For example, Bronfenbrenner's exosystem represents the educational system where policies decide when and how children start formal reading instruction and in what language whilst the mesosystemic level of influence corresponds to the impact that parents and teachers have on the child's literacy development.

The most comprehensive and detailed framework for examining biliteracy development in diverse settings is Hornbergers's (2003) continua of biliteracy. The model not only encapsulates a great number of factors associated with the acquisition of reading and writing skills but is also multidimensional, in that it allows for the relationships between the different features to be taken into account. A further advantage of the framework is that it is dynamic, allowing for possible changes along the continua in which relations of power differentials play a vital part. These power relationships, organised along a set of twelve continua, are illustrated in the figure below.

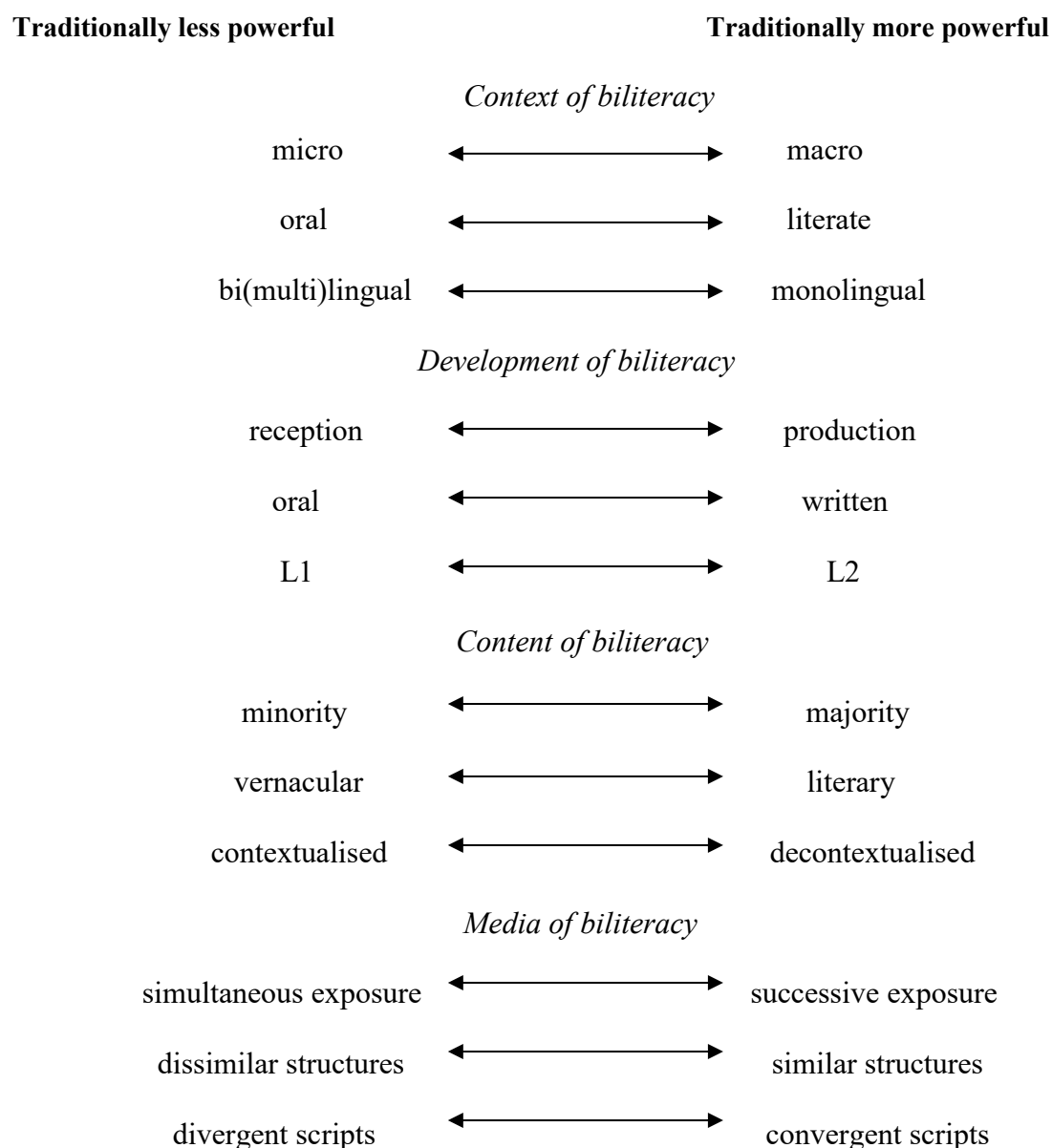


Figure1: Power relations in the continua model (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, 2003: 39)

Hornberger (2003) argues that within education policy and practice there tends to be an implicit privileging of one end of the continuum over the other which has implications for children's biliteracy development. For a full analysis of how the Continua of Biliteracy maps onto the experiences of Chinese children's biliteracy development in Scotland refer to Hancock (2014).

Bloch and Alexander (2003) illustrate the significance of the Continua of Biliteracy by providing an account of language policy and planning in South Africa. Using the 11 official languages of South Africa, English is positioned at the powerful end of the micro-macro context continua. Despite being given official status in 1993-94, the nine

African languages are clustered at the less powerful micro end as they lack prestige and are frequently overlooked in the school system after Grade 4. In spite of the historical legacy as the language of apartheid, the authors situate Afrikaans in between the micro and macro ends of the continua because of the significance of the language to the rural economy and the number of speakers from the 'non-white' community.

A benefit of the Continua is it allows reflective practitioners to evaluate their daily practice. For example, how can educators move from the traditionally more powerful English context of biliteracy to the traditionally less powerful home language context? The answer is they can make choices and exercise power by encouraging family members to contribute oral texts in the home language to the school (for example, *ntsomi* or traditional stories and biographies). In an attempt to deal with the shortage of reading material in isiXhosa, Hunt (2007), describes a project in an Eastern Cape rural community school where oral texts were turned into print and electronic text through shared writing, and acted as reading resources through paired reading. This initiative produced 'culturally appropriate' resources and at the same time enhanced community engagement with the school. For other projects of this type, see, for example, Satyo and Gxekwa; Figlan and Desai et al. in this volume.

The reality of this policy context means linguistic minority pupils face a number of challenges. First, they are 'submerged' into a new language in mainstream classrooms and face the dual task of learning English while attempting to access the curriculum through this new or developing language. Tabors (1997) refers to this phenomena as the 'double bind'. Second, these pupils frequently do not have sufficient competency in English to interact with native speaking peers who provide important friendships and good models of the target language. Third, they must quickly adapt to a learning and teaching environment which may be culturally unfamiliar to them.

However, within the current policy context, these children starting school are faced with two competing languages, one of which is the language of education and power. There is a strong incentive, therefore, for those in the language minority to learn the language of power in order to participate fully in society. In this situation, they risk losing their home language, which is often perceived by wider society as a low status language. In fact, according to García (2009), the language shift will be complete

within three generations, and the third generation will lose the ability to communicate in what was the family's home language. That is to say the educational outcome is monolingualism, or at best, limited bilingualism, where learners are forced to assimilate into the majority language and culture as soon as possible.

The vast majority of families belonging to linguistic minorities are keen to maintain the language of the home as it is integral to their identity, home literacy practices and cultural heritage. In these circumstances it is often left to concerned parents and communities to self-fund and organise heritage language schools outside of mainstream schools to maintain the language, literacy and culture of the home. The challenges for children in this subtractive context are to develop literacy skills to a sophisticated and academic level when literacy learning is restricted to the weekend or evening classes and support at home (Hancock, 2012b).

Gaelic Medium Education: an additive model?

The 'sink or swim' model (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010) described above is in stark contrast to the enrichment-orientated provision increasingly introduced in Scotland for Gaelic medium education (GME). Although the legal status of Gaelic was strengthened through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 which declares Gaelic to be an 'official language of Scotland', the 2011 census saw a further fall in the total number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. However youngsters who spoke Gaelic grew in popularity and this revival among the 4-14 age group is a direct result of substantial investment by Scottish Government in Gaelic-medium education (GME) in primary schools to safeguard the language for the future. The number of children entering Primary 1 (start of school for 4-5year olds) in GME rose by 12% in 2013 and GME is currently available in units in about sixty primary schools throughout Scotland.

Surveys have repeatedly indicated that the vast majority of parents cite the social and academic advantages of bilingualism as one of the main reasons for choosing GME for their children (O'Hanlon et al. 2010). This parental attitude is backed up by research into attainment which demonstrates that children in GME (who are not exposed to English in the classroom until at seven years of age) tend to outperform their English medium counterparts in English literacy acquisition by the end of their primary schooling (O'Hanlon et al. 2010). These favourable findings are consistent

with international studies conducted into other language immersion programmes (Fortune and Tedick 2008) and highlight GME's capacity to contribute to the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

In 2018 Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with support from the Scottish Government, launched a third five-year in National Language Plan for Gaelic 2018-23, with an aim to increase demand for Gaelic education and support groups of parents who request GME provision. The cognitive and personal advantages of this type of bilingual education are the reasons put forward to explain why the proportion of children from non-Gaelic-speaking backgrounds who attend Gaelic-medium classes continues to increase.

However, policy planners (and educationalists) need to take into account a number of factors if GME aims to sustain its educational achievements and children's longer-term proficiency in Gaelic-English bilingualism. First, there is no written national guidance for GME which defines effective pedagogical practice in delivering this type of bilingual provision. According to educational inspectors (HMIE 2011) different interpretations of immersion and total immersion have emerged across Scotland resulting in a great variation in teaching methodologies and in children's learning experiences. One of the challenges for teachers working in GME is taking account of shifting Gaelic identities (Oliver 2005) and the increasing numbers of pupils drawn from non-Gaelic speaking homes (especially in the urban conurbations) which requires a shared understanding of the principles of additional language acquisition, knowledge of research into bilingualism and pedagogical practices associated with different models of immersion education.

Literacy learning: Closing the attainment gap in Scottish Education

Scottish education serves many children well, but Scotland has a long-standing educational attainment gap associated with poverty. This attainment gap between children from the richest and poorest backgrounds is wider than in many similar countries in the developed world such as the Netherlands and New Zealand. 20 per cent of people in Scotland are in poverty, including 26 per cent of children, and lower attainment in literacy is linked to deprivation throughout primary school. The gap

between children from low-income and high-income households starts early and by 5 years of age, the gap is 10–13 months and one in five children growing up in poverty leaves primary school not reading well (Sosu & Ellis, 2014).

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys show that increasing reading engagement can mitigate 30 per cent of the attainment gap. Krashen (2004), a strong advocate for children's reading, suggests that children regularly engaged in reading augments a myriad of literacy skills including lexical growth, reading fluency and gaining knowledge of different reading strategies to suit particular purposes such as skimming and scanning. More practice in reading also leads to improvements in writing abilities as children internalize essential skills of spelling, syntax and punctuation and absorb the conventions of expression, narrative and story structure. Children are then able to use these ideas and understandings to generate their own writing (Glazzard and Palmer, 2015).

Children's literature also plays a powerful role in shaping how readers think about themselves and the world in which they live. Stories provide opportunities for escapism and entering into imaginary worlds that are far removed from the realities of children's everyday lives. At the same time Kirkpatrick (2012) describes the cathartic effects of oral story telling of traditional tales.

Conversely, children's limited exposure to reading materials will have a negative impact on their literacy acquisition. These different patterns of reading engagement are reminiscent of Stanovich's (1986) 'Matthew effect' where the gap between good and less able readers gets wider over time as independent readers gain more exposure to print and thereby process more information, acquire wider vocabularies and are more able to access to the school curriculum.

Over the last three decades the Scottish Government has instigated a multitude of key strategies to boost the levels of literacy in the early stages of schooling and close the attainment gap whilst continuing to raise attainment for all learners. These initiatives include Early Intervention Programme (1997), Literacy Action Plan (2010), Attainment Challenge (2015) and Pupil Equity Fund (2017). Despite additional funding there continues to be an attainment gap – where those from lower socio-

economic communities underperform compared to their peers and the most recent Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy revealed that literacy rates have been falling for the past four years.

There have also been a number of national initiatives focusing on family literacy including *Read, Write, Count* [<http://www.readwritecount.scot/>], *Play, Talk, Read* [<http://playtalkread.scot/>] and Scottish Book Trust's *Bookbug* scheme [<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/bookbug>] which focuses on songs and rhymes as a foundation for emergent reading.

The Scottish Book Trust's book gifting programme involves working through locally-based partners including libraries, health professionals, early years settings and primary schools, free packs of books are gifted to all children in Scotland when they are aged around six weeks, eighteen months, three years and when they start school at five years of age, along with guidance materials for parents and carers. A number of research studies have been commissioned in Scotland to look at the impact of the bookgifting programme, including Berry and McMellon (2008) who report on the benefits of intervening early and building a foundation of literacy in young children. Hancock and Leslie (2010) show how involving parents in picture book writing can help them reflect on how they read to their children at home. Furthermore, Spatt et al., (2009) demonstrate the value of including dual language books to support biliteracy acquisition in families where languages other than English are spoken.

Approaches to teaching reading

Approaches to reading in English have been characterised by dichotomists views among academics and educationalists and continues to be fiercely debated throughout the English-speaking world (Krashen, 2003). These disagreements or 'reading wars' hinge on different teaching methodologies and philosophies around whether instruction should consist of a bottom-up discrete phonic skills instruction to allow readers to 'crack the alphabetic code' (Adams, 1990) or immersing children in a culture of literacy where children make use of their experiences of life and their knowledge of the way stories work to help them read (Smith, 1986). These 'language experience' teaching practices include a strong emphasis on authentic language (teacher scribing the child's speech as reading material) and 'real books'. A lack of

consensus about the most appropriate pedagogical approaches to teaching reading has led to eclectic policies and practices across schools in Scotland (Hancock, 2010).

Unfortunately, what is frequently absent from the debate is what pedagogical practice best meets the needs of children who are learning to read English through an additional language or read an African language written in the Roman alphabet. Bloch (2002a: 24) describes the perception of literacy learning in the Foundation stage in South Africa as made up of separate skills that can be taught and tested through methods that are heavy on 'part to whole' phonics teaching and light on meaning-making, enjoyment and purposeful communication. The former traditional methodologies include an emphasis on rote learning and secretarial skills such as correct letter formation, spelling and copying. Meanwhile, Rule and Land (2017) describe a predominant mode of 'oratorical' reading in classrooms where the teachers' performance places an emphasis on accuracy and pronunciation. Given these perceptions it is worth giving a synoptic view of the taken-for-granted methods currently used to teach alphabetic scripts.

The synthetic phonics approach to reading English teaches children to pronounce in isolation the forty-four phonemes associated with particular graphemes (twenty of these are vowel sounds and twenty-four are consonant sounds). Observations in Scotland show this type of teaching to be whole class, highly structured and sequential (Hancock, 2010). A related commercial programme, *Jolly Phonics*, popular in schools across Scotland, uses multisensory and kinaesthetic methods by teaching children actions associated with forty-two sounds. For example, for *a* children wiggle fingers above their elbow as if ants are crawling on them and they say *a a a*. Simplified vocabulary based on 'regular' consonant-vowel-consonant words means that early reading material within phonic based reading schemes may be dull, repetitive and contrived ('the vet went on a jet'). Also, phonemes and words are frequently presented in a decontextualised manner rather than in a wider framework of language learning.

In a similar vein, phonemic awareness using the isiXhosa alphabet is taught in Grade 1 classrooms in South Africa but individual sounds can be used out of context by

teachers in an attempt to align with the structure of English phonology rather than using isiXhosa words within the learners' environment.

The synthetic phonics programme piloted in some local educational authorities in Scotland has gained increasing attention not only in Scotland but also in England, Australia and the U.S.A. A seven-year research study conducted in a cluster of schools in Scotland claims children taught synthetic phonics first and fast outperformed their peers who had been subjected to analytical phonics teaching (Johnston and Watson, 2005).

However, the research has been questioned by a number of academics who believe that the children may be good at decoding lists of words presented in isolation but these skills often mask difficulties with reading comprehension (Sen and Blatchford, 2001). In other words the children only show improvement in the skills they are trained in. Further criticism of the synthetic approach is there is no evidence that children became more engaged in wider reading as exposure to meaningful texts is crucial for all children's literacy development.

Synthetic phonics differs from analytic phonics as phonemes are not initially pronounced in isolation. The emphasis starts with whole words, then segmenting these into onsets (the part of the syllable which preceded the vowel) and rimes (the rest) (e.g. *m-ouse*, *h-ouse*). Onsets and rimes are then used to generate analogies. For example, the target word *mouse* must begin with the sound /m/ because its first letter is the same as known words *my* and *mum*. It ends the same way as *house* so it must rhyme with this word. Because many onsets consist of single phonemes, (*mum*, *my*, *mouse*) phoneme awareness develops alongside familiarity with onset and rime. All of these decoding strategies are often learned in the course of shared reading. This approach draws on the influential work of Goswami and Bryant (1990) and their claim that children's grasp of phonological awareness (recognizing, segmenting and manipulating sounds) is a strong predictor of early success with reading.

The strengths of the analytic approach for learners of EAL are threefold. First, it involves early experience of whole language reading material, including familiar forms like nursery rhymes. Second, it engages with children's playful interest in

rhyme and alliteration (hence the growing popularity of Dr Seuss books) and last, it provides strategies for reading words that cannot be sounded out on a letter-by-letter basis. On the other hand limitations of the approach include the lack of systematic and incremental instruction (as what is taught may be based on incidental reading) and an early emphasis on whole words may delay children's segmenting and synthesising skills.

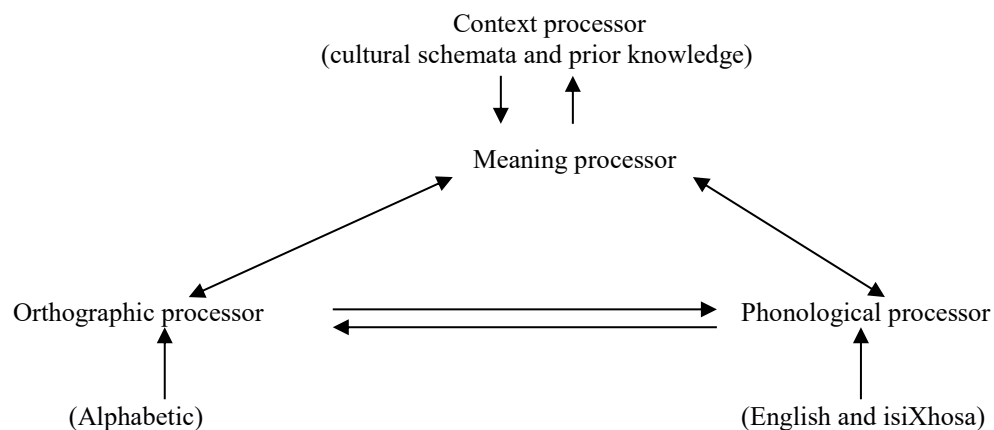
Reading in English is capricious in nature with rules governing grapheme-phoneme correspondence frequently irregular which can cause difficulties for beginner readers to master. Therefore, a third approach to reading alphabetic scripts is using a total reading programme including independent word recognition strategies to facilitate fluent reading in conjunction with understanding. The *Oxford Reading Tree*, a popular reading scheme in Scotland, includes 'look and say' methods where key vocabulary (using word walls and flashcards) is recognised by sight. However, it can be argued that children may still require support with phonetic decoding, phonemic awareness and segmentation. This is also relevant to isiXhosa's multisyllabic words and dense texts.

Reading in two languages

The complex picture involved in acquiring biliteracy can be illustrated in the figure below which demonstrates reading as an interactive process of gaining meaning from print. When learning to read in an additional language children may face the dual task of recognizing a new written code (in the case of diverse orthographies such as English and Chinese) as well as orchestrating the three cueing systems (graphophonic, syntactic and semantic) in a language in which they have limited oral proficiency. In the case of isiXhosa and English both share the same Roman script but isiXhosa is phonetically regular, while English can be irregular. For instance, in English some graphemes represent more than one phoneme (cut, circle; church,) and conversely, a single phoneme can be represented by many different graphemes (fat, graph, enough). Therefore children need to be aware of similar and different sound-symbol correspondences of the two languages. For example, the pronunciation of the five vowels, consonant combinations not found in English and the three basic clicks in isiXhosa.

In theory, as children develop more understanding of the relationship between sounds and letters they can pronounce new and unfamiliar words when they read in an additional language. But they may not have the depth of vocabulary or cultural knowledge to access meaning from the stories to which they are exposed in schools.

Top-down processing skills



Bottom-up processing skills

Fig 1 Processes at work when reading isiXhosa and English

Adapted from Adams (1990:158)

The role of the reader's pre-existing knowledge framework or 'schema' provides the main guiding context through which information gained from the page is reconstructed and interpreted. This significant factor not only includes extracting literal information from the text but also the ability to read between and beyond the lines. (For a description of schema theory in second language reading comprehension see Nassaji, 2007). These knowledge-based processes in additional language reading cannot be cultivated by just studying the language itself, it has to be supported by increasing familiarity with culturally established ways of seeing, knowing and understanding the world (Leung, 2004).

More often than not, the education system treats the two languages and literacies of the children separately and the teacher focuses on the problems that the lack of proficiency causes. By contrast, Cummins (2000) prefers to see the languages as

interwoven and uses the *iceberg* analogy to illustrate this point. The two peaks of the iceberg above the waterline represent the distinct surface features of the different languages but underneath the water the two languages share a common underlying proficiency which allows concepts and skills to be transferred from one language to another. For example a child who has learnt to read isiXhosa will already have developed literacy skills such as decoding an alphabetic script. They will not have to learn to read again but they will merely have to adapt their decoding skills to the phonology or sound system of English when reading. However, they will require additional support with the comprehension of English texts. For example, children will not have the depth of vocabulary to make sense of the new words they are reading or the cultural knowledge to gain meaning from some of the stories to which they are exposed to in school.

The danger here (within a submersion context) is illustrated by Cline's (1999) research project investigating reading skills of nine-year-old children with EAL. The findings revealed that children with limited English vocabulary, who are given unfamiliar texts in a new language, may develop compensatory habits and become over reliant on surface (grapho-phonetic) and syntactic cues and fail to construct meaning from the text.

At the same time enhanced vocabularies and wider phonological systems have been found to give bilingual children enhanced metalinguistic skills. That is, the ability to talk about language and how it works and a facility for learning further languages more easily (Bialystok, 2011) Therefore, it comes as no surprise that accumulating research points to the benefits of bilingualism on academic achievement when conditions are favourable to bilingual development (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2004).

These 'favourable' conditions relate to the threshold theory where there is sufficient exposure and proficiency in the languages to allow for positive transfer of literacy concepts and skills (Dow, Krashen and Tinajero 2010). Within the South Africa context there is a need to consider how this interdependence hypothesis relates to children operating within an educational system where their oral home language is the

basis for their first literacy in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) but there is an abrupt switch to literacy in English from Grade 4.

Discussion: “*A map of Edinburgh will not help you in Cape Town*”

The choice of language(s) of instruction continues to be fiercely contested in educational systems across the globe – that is the low status attached to heritage/minority languages mixed with parental aspirations where English is often perceived as a global language and a means to educational achievement and upward social mobility. The adoption of mother tongue teaching at early stages of primary school in South Africa makes sound pedagogical sense based on research in additive contexts and a situation where children learn their first literacy through a language that is familiar to them.

However, Desai (2016) talks about language of instruction being disabling rather than enabling due to the debilitating practice of abruptly cutting off the learning of literacy through the home language and replacing it with literacy in English. This makes researching transfer among the children in South Africa a tricky enterprise as the learners’ first literacy is still evolving (Bloch, 2002b). More up to date thinking views language pedagogy as not an either/or but children engaging in ‘translanguaging’ in classrooms where children draw on all the linguistic resources at their disposal to support learning across the curriculum (García et al. 2017).

Milligan et al (forthcoming) draw on Benson’s germane questions about language use in the classroom –

- 1) is the learner taught and assessed in a language s/he understands and speaks well?
- 2), does instruction draw on the learner’s prior experiences and resources to construct new knowledge?
- 3) are teachers proficient in the language(s) of instruction?

As classrooms become increasing more diverse I would add a fourth question – do teachers have knowledge of theories of additional language acquisition and understandings of pedagogical approaches needed for additional language learners to access the curriculum?

When exploring children learning literacies it is important to stress that language of instruction is only one element (albeit an important one) in a very complex educational puzzle with numerous structural and institutional challenges such as poverty, school leadership, teachers' professional learning and classroom methodologies. (For the challenges facing schools in South Africa see Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) and Desai (2017)). Any grassroots change needs to be cognizant of cultural concepts of teaching and learning. Teachers act as cultural carriers and their ideological perspectives imbued within classroom rituals (which can be deep or subtle) continue to be influential in classrooms.

Alexander (2000) believes that there is far more to the effectiveness of pedagogy than making a simple choice between methodologies such as whole class teaching or collaborative group work. Rather, it is how structure, policy and practice relate to the context of culture. This can involve teachers' belief systems about approaches to teaching literacy, parents' attitudes and values towards their heritage language, children's experiences in and outside of school and, importantly, the relationships and interactions between teachers and children.

Alexander (2008) suggests ways of rethinking classroom organization and relationships by fostering repertoires of organizing interaction, teaching talk and learning talk. His seminal work on dialogic teaching outlines five criteria - collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful, all of which may provide a useful focus for reflective practice and enhancing interactions in classrooms. Through professional learning and practitioner enquiry teachers can become agents of change by reflecting on their own role and transforming what Biesta (2009) refers to as the 'socialisation' function of schooling where children are institutionalised within classrooms by agreed and unquestioned ways of doing things.

This chapter has explored some of the complex issues surrounding children learning literacies in multilingual societies drawing on both Scotland and South Africa. Both educational contexts have their challenges but the intention is not to draw parallels nor for South Africa to learn from Scotland. Both countries have unique political histories, socio-economic structures and language-in-education policies. It is hoped that by

sharing aspects of education in Scotland questions will be raised and areas for further professional discourse will emerge and be debated.

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